

Dear Ms. Claypool,

Thank you for your letter to Rep. King dated October 1, 2009. While we appreciate your efforts in preparing a response, we are surprised that you did not use the opportunity to provide proof of your original assertion, as made in your September 9, 2009, letter to the editor in the Des Moines Register, that statements Rep. King made in his August 26th Register OpEd regarding potential coverage of immigrants in current healthcare proposals were “incorrect.”

In all five pages of your letter to Rep. King, the only backing for your assertion that his statements of August 26th were “incorrect” is found on page 4 in the claim that “our research indicates that unauthorized immigrants are unlikely to substantially benefit from the proposed health care insurance reforms under H.R. 3200.” Unfortunately, you did not provide any such research. There was no evidence offered to support this claim. It was inserted, near the very end of your lengthy letter, as a statement of fact, yet no facts were offered to substantiate it.

To inform your research into this matter, we provided you with factual evidence from both the non-partisan Congressional Budget Office and the non-partisan Congressional Research Service to support the claims Rep. King made in his August 26th OpEd – namely that up to 5.6 million illegal immigrants would be insured as a result of the passage of H.R. 3200 and that there is no mechanism in place under H.R. 3200 to ensure that illegal immigrants will not benefit from the new health benefits created by the bill. Your letter ignored these facts. Your letter also ignored the concern Rep. King raised on August 26th regarding the bill’s suggestion that if one member of a household is eligible for benefits, everyone in that household will be considered eligible. We are disappointed that you did not take advantage of your October 10th response to explain your rationale for the claim that Rep. King was ‘incorrect’ in stating these findings as fact.

Interestingly, though your letter seems to have purposefully avoided a discussion of the loopholes contained in H.R. 3200 that Rep. King highlighted in his August 26th OpEd, it went to great lengths to defend the effort to water down Medicaid’s formerly strict citizenship verification requirements. You began by pointing out that H.R. 3200 includes language stating that “Nothing in this title shall change current prohibitions against Federal Medicaid and CHIP payments under titles XIX and XXI of the Social Security Act on behalf of individuals who are not lawfully present in the United States.” While this is a true statement, it highlights a significant issue, given that current law allows individuals to receive taxpayer funded health care under Medicaid by simply providing a working social security number – which the Social Security Commissioner has stated cannot verify Medicaid applicants’ citizenship status. Thus, allowing applicants to provide a Social Security number rather than verifiable documentation of their citizenship (as had been required prior to the change in law in February) will make it easier for illegal aliens to receive taxpayer funded health benefits through Medicaid. This was the basis for Rep. King’s August 26th statement that this recent change in law would “create an open door to Medicaid fraud and abuse by illegals.” We find no facts in your letter to invalidate this statement, and we are therefore puzzled as to how you have concluded that Rep. King was ‘incorrect’ in making such a statement.

In your letter, you go on to argue that, under the previous documentation requirements, citizens who could not produce sufficient documentation to verify their citizenship were denied benefits. Though this may have been the case, anyone seeking benefits paid for by the taxpayer should be expected to prove that they are who they say they are and that they are legally entitled to benefits as a citizen of the United States. The congressman believes this is a reasonable expectation that most Americans support.

You further argue that, based upon the assumptions of Iowa's Medicaid Program Director, none of the 21,329 individuals in Iowa who did not gain/regain Medicaid eligibility because of a failure to verify citizenship/identity are illegal immigrants. Absent any facts to substantiate this claim, it seems foolish to suggest that none of the 21,329 are, in fact, illegal aliens. However, even if it could be factually proven that none are present in the U.S. illegally, none should receive any taxpayer funded benefit if they are unwilling, at a very minimum, to provide proof that they are entitled to the benefits as a citizen.

Finally, you argue that citizenship documentation requirements within Medicaid were a costly burden to states. While there is no doubt that citizenship verification comes with some cost, given that citizenship status can only be determined through a review of verifiable documentation, there is no alternative that is equally effective and yet more cost efficient. As stated above, efforts to put such a system in place have left us with a Social Security number-based system that the Social Security Commissioner himself has stated is unable to determine citizenship status.

In closing, we once again ask that you provide the facts upon which you based your allegation that Rep. King's "statements of [August 26th] regarding potential coverage of immigrants in current healthcare proposals [were] incorrect."

Sincerely,

Casaday Nguyen  
Legislative Assistant  
Congressman Steve King (IA-05)